REMARKS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-mentioned Office Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 26-44 are now pending in the application, with Claims 26, 36-39, and 41 being independent. Claims 26, 29-31, 33, 34, and 36-40 have been amended and Claims 41-44 are newly-presented herein.

Claims 28 was withdrawn from consideration by the Examiner. Should Claim 26 be allowed, it is respectfully requested that the non-elected dependent claim be rejoined and also allowed. Favorable consideration is requested.

Claims 26, 30-32, 34, 35, and 38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0231234 (Ushirogouchi et al.) in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0041316 (Katsuragi et al.). Claims 27, 29, 36, 37, 39, and 40 were rejected under § 103 as being unpatentable over Ushirogouchi et al. and Katsuragi et al. and in further view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0068571 (Uehara et al.). Claim 33 was rejected under § 103 as being unpatentable over Ushirogouchi et al. and Katsuragi et al. and in further view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0064206 (Koyano et al.). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent Claim 26, for example, relates to an image forming method comprising the steps of performing hydrophilic treatment for making a surface of an intermediate transfer body hydrophilic by applying energy to the surface of the intermediate transfer body; applying a liquid for reducing the fluidity of ink on the intermediate transfer

body having the surface on which the hydrophilic treatment has been performed; forming an image by ejecting the ink from an ink jet head on the intermediate transfer body on which the liquid has been applied; and transferring the image formed on the intermediate transfer body to a recording medium.

In contrast, Ushirogouchi et al. discloses an ink layer, formed by applying liquid ink comprised of a photo acid generating agent, a coloring material, and a solvent. Fluidity of the liquid ink is reduced by irradiating light. (*See* Paragraphs 0053-0055). In particular, Ushirogouchi et al. discloses the ink layer is formed by applying a liquid ink from an ink jet type recording head 4 on a drum 18a acting as an image carrier. Fluidity of the liquid ink is reduced by irradiating light from a light source 5, and the liquid ink, with the reduced fluidity, is transferred to a recording medium 2. (*See* Figs. 10 and 11). Thus, according to Ushirogouchi et al., irradiation of light makes the surface of the drum hydrophilic.

In Ushirogouchi et al., however, the irradiation of light is effected after the ink has been applied on the drum. Independent Claim 26, on the other hand, recites the steps of performing hydrophilic treatment on a surface of an intermediate transfer body, applying a liquid on the intermediate transfer body having the surface on which the hydrophilic treatment has been performed, and forming an image by ejecting ink from an ink jet head on the intermediate transfer body on which liquid has been applied. That is, the ink is ejected after the liquid is applied, which is after the hydrophilic treatment is performed.

The Office Action (at p. 3), further recognizes that Ushirogouchi et al. does not disclose that a liquid for reacting with an ink to reduce the fluidity of the ink is used.

Thus, Ushirogouchi et al. fails to disclose or suggest important features of the present invention recited in independent Claim 26.

For similar reasons, Ushirogouchi et al. cannot disclose or suggest at least performing plasma processing on a surface of an intermediate transfer body, applying liquid on the intermediate transfer body having the surface on which the plasma processing has been performed, and forming an image by ejecting ink from an ink jet head on the intermediate transfer body on which the liquid has been applied, as is recited in independent Claims 36 and 37. Nor does Ushirogouchi et al. disclose or suggest at least applying a liquid on an intermediate transfer body on which hydrophilic treatment has been performed, and forming an image by ejecting ink from an ink jet head on the intermediate transfer body on which the liquid has been applied, as is recited in the independent Claims 38, 39 and 41.

Thus, Ushirogouchi et al. Also fails to disclose or suggest important features of the present invention recited in independent Claims 36, 37-39 and 41.

While Katsuragi et al. discloses a liquid capable of reacting with an ink, the liquid is applied to a recording medium, not an intermediate transfer body. However, in Ushirogouchi et al. there is no need for using such liquid, because the reduction of ink fluidity is achieved by the irradiation of light. Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not apply such liquid for reacting with the ink of Ushirogouchi et al. At most, the combination proposed in the Office Action (at p. 3) would disclose (i) forming an ink layer on an intermediate transfer body, (ii) reducing the fluidity of the ink layer by irradiating light on the ink layer, and (iii) transferring an ink layer with the reduced fluidity

on a printing medium to which a liquid for reacting with the ink is applied. Therefore, Katsuragi et al. does not cure the deficiencies of Ushirogouchi et al. noted above.

The secondary citations to Uehara et al. and Koyano et al. do not cure the deficiencies of Ushirogouchi et al. and Katsuragi et al. discussed above.

Thus, independent Claims 26, 36-39, and 41are patentable over the citations of record. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 103 rejections are respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention is patentably defined by independent Claims 26, 36-39, and 41. Dependent Claims 27-35, 40, and 42-44 are also allowable, in their own right, for defining features of the present invention in addition to those recited in their respective independent claims. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is requested.

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action, and an early Notice of Allowability are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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